



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

August 2013 VOLUME 4 ISSUE 8

\$1

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Redemption requires a clean slate



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

My grandfather was a reckless youth – that much we know about him. A century ago, he came to New York from Romania as a teen. Shortly thereafter, he took the name of his married sister and fled to Philadelphia. Family lore speculates that he killed a man in self-defense while in New York or Romania, or that he had unpaid gambling debts, but they all agree that he was hiding from the New York-based Jewish mob or police.

Whatever his past transgressions, he lived at a time when one could pick up and go, assume a new identity and start over. He grew into a religious family man whose seven children were successful by every measure and never

had even the tiniest scrape with the law.

Today, people do not have much opportunity for a do-over. Some Groundcover vendors are frequently thwarted in their efforts to gain regular employment or housing by a past transgression that follows them everywhere. One day they come into our office, eyes shining and standing tall, excitedly sharing that they were hired at a local business and will start in a week or two, once the paperwork has been processed. A week later they slump through the door with hanging heads and vacant eyes and let us know that the offer was rescinded when the background check turned up an old crime.

This dilemma is played out across the nation and often results in the ex-offender either subsisting on disability or welfare payments, if they are lucky enough to qualify and be approved for them, or committing another crime out of frustration or need. Many states have recognized this as a problem, especially after decades of mandatory sentencing for even minor drug possession. Some have made it illegal to discriminate based on past criminal history. Others have introduced mechanisms for expunging the records of reformed criminals.

Two years ago, Michigan passed a law that allows a person with one felony and up to two misdemeanors to get the felony set aside, if the crimes occurred when the perpetrator was 21 or younger and the maximum prison sentence for the misdemeanors was 90 days or less, whether or not the maximum sentence was imposed. It is one of the most restrictive expungement laws in the country. Legal Services of Eastern Michigan (LSEM), which handles expungements every day, has observed that the new law is not helping many people because the maximum sentence for many misdemeanors is 93 days.

“Not being able to expunge even misdemeanors is keeping many people from getting jobs, and it’s continuing a circle of poverty and government program dependence,” said Ed Hoort, LSEM’s Executive Director. “Studies show that about 30 percent of American adults have criminal records and a majority of employers will not knowingly hire a person with a criminal conviction. In fact, many companies have policies against hiring ex-felons and for many jobs companies are required by state law to do fingerprint checks and are not allowed to hire someone convicted of certain crimes.”

An LSEM client we’ll call Beverly came in with a breaking-and-entering felony conviction on her record and a minor

offense of stealing property less than \$100. Although this happened when she was a teenager and she was now in her 40s, she was still unable to apply for the conviction to be set aside because the maximum penalty on the misdemeanor was 93 days – three days more than what the 2011 law allows.

“Criminal penalties for more misdemeanor crime categories have been increased over the past years, from a maximum of 90 days imprisonment to 93 days, in order to trigger fingerprinting and record retention requirements,” said LSEM’s Tara Parker. “Most people needing an expungement are ineligible because the misdemeanors on their records would likely carry the 93-day maximum.”

Another client at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan is trying to provide for her children but can’t find a job because she has a felony drug conviction on her record. It happened some 23 years ago. A second drug conviction a year or two later makes her ineligible so she’ll likely remain on government assistance.

A new bill in the State House could remedy these pitfalls in the 2011 law. House Bill 4186 would revise the law to allow a person convicted of one felony offense and not more than two misdemeanor offenses to petition to have set aside the felony offense. Since the wording says “misdemeanor” instead of “minor offenses,” it would most likely eliminate the age restriction and allow adult misdemeanors to be expunged. It also appears to eliminate the maximum penalty restriction.

The bill would also allow a person convicted of not more than two misdemeanor offenses, and no other felony or misdemeanor offenses, to apply to have one or both of the misdemeanor convictions set aside. It would also allow people who were previously turned down for

expungement to reapply.

The proposed bill would not allow individuals to expunge crimes punishable by life in prison, most sexual offenses, some instances of domestic violence, or drunk driving. It would also expand access to the nonpublic records and allow law enforcement agencies and the Department of Corrections to determine if a person applying for a job with them has ever had a conviction set aside.

“A misdemeanor conviction for a non-violent offense can keep someone from getting a job or receiving certain licenses to get employment,” said Hoort. “Ex-offenders are also denied housing in some instances and are denied financial aid for college. It’s that never-ending cycle that keeps some people with minor offenses from rebuilding their lives by going to school and getting jobs to become functioning members of society.”

I wonder what would have become of my grandfather, let alone his progeny, if he had faced the hurdles so many Groundcover vendors face today.

Secret Government?

Dear Editor,

The recent revelation of National Security Agency bugging of personal phone and computer use is very troubling. Given the spotty ethical record of past Federal actions, the questions of how much secrecy is really needed and how it will be monitored are only the start. During World War II, thousands of innocent Japanese-Americans were dispossessed and herded into concentration camps on the West Coast. Only an active level of monitoring ability can stop this type of abuse from happening again.

Paul Lambert



A choice to be made



by Rev. Dr. Martha
Brunell
Groundcover
Contributor

My friend Mary Kay runs a bed and breakfast with her husband in a town about thirty-five miles from where I live. It is a beautiful, intimate place with lovely grounds including a labyrinth. Built in 1854 by the man who brought the railroad to this particular small community, the bed and breakfast is both tucked in a quiet corner of town and located not too far from the tracks. The innkeepers always let potential guests know they will hear trains during their stay and not just during daylight hours. Mary Kay recalls a conversation with two of their guests on the topic of trains.

One guest was complaining bitterly about the noise from the trains. Apparently, he had forgotten that he was fully apprised of the train situation before making his reservation. The other guest shared an entirely different perspective on the periodic passing of the trains. He said that every train was carrying passengers or freight and represented a strengthening of the economy after very difficult years. He was glad to hear each train come rumbling down the tracks. Two guests in the same situation responded so very differently.

The contrast in how they framed the train issue reminded me of a time in my life years ago when I was working as a

hospice chaplain. One morning I was in a nursing home where I always had a handful of patients. The nurses’ station sat in the middle of several corridors. While I was doing my charting there, an older woman who was a resident at the home was making her way slowly down one of those corridors. With great volume she kept shouting over and over the same phrase: “Help me Jesus! Help me Jesus!” Just about the time I thought I was going to jump out of my skin with frustration, a nurse who worked at the facility made this gentle observation. “She needs a new line.” She said it so matter-of-factly and with care rather than judgment. We were two healers in the same situation whose responses varied greatly. I was grateful for how her comment helped me to immediately deflate my ballooning anger.

You and I find ourselves in moments every day that try our patience and fray our nerves. We may be tired or in quite a hurry. Perhaps our compassion is in short supply. Always we have the opportunity to reframe our position on whatever threatens to frustrate us. I have never forgotten a nurse I sat next to for a few minutes in an earlier season of life. And now I will be mindful of two bed and breakfast guests and the difference in how they interacted with the noisy interruption of a nearby train. What I hope to carry from each of these living memories is the reality of the choice we have in how we respond to anything, especially the hard or irritating things. That’s your choice too, a choice that balances the anger with lightness. It is a choice that keeps the rising annoyance from overwhelming one. You and I can both choose well.

A few moments’ bounty

by Annie Rose
Cantor, Temple Beth Emeth

What a delight it is to take a summer walk and focus on every sense, one at a time! Someone suggested this in an article I read, so I tried it today and felt so uplifted afterwards. There’s no special technique necessary – just a decision to choose one sense at a time and be in it to the fullest.

My walk went something like this:

Noticing the amazing smell of bread baking. Ah – gratitude for this! *Stay right here for a moment and breathe it in!* How beautiful.

Noticing the sound of that kind caregiver’s voice, gently asking the child to hold the handrail of the walkway, and answering question after question posed by the child. Ah – how lovely is the care of someone who gives so fully!

Noticing the way the pavement feels under my feet, a pavement created by many people and walked on by many others through the years. Deep gratitude to those who work to create such important pathways!

Noticing the smile on the face of the woman selling newspapers, her tanned face well-lined and so very friendly. I am blessed by her smile. We all are!

Finishing my walk, feeling more aware of and connected to my surroundings and the people I have seen along the way, I take a few extra moments to say: Thank You, Source of All, for these many gifts!

August Calendar of Events

August 1-29 – Sonic Lunch 2013 Summer Concerts at Liberty Square, 12-1:30 p.m. (Thursdays). Free live music and local food vendors, every Thursday throughout summer. Liberty Square, 500 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. More info: soniclunch.com, or email info@soniclunch.com.

August 1-29 – Depot Town Cruise Nights, 5-9 p.m. (Thursdays). Classic cars, hot rods, and custom-builds on display along Cross Street in Ypsi every Thursday throughout summer. Cross between Huron and River Streets, Ypsilanti. More info: visitypsinow.com/cruise_ypsi.

August 2 – Growing Hope Monthly Community Potluck and Sustainability Film Series, 6-8:30 p.m. A monthly event to cultivate community and engage anyone interested in sustainable communities, urban farming, and healthy food access. All are invited (including kids) to share in a meal and discussion with friends and neighbors. Film on sustainability theme immediately following potluck (roughly 7 p.m.). Please bring a dish to pass, and RSVP. Ypsilanti Public Library Downtown Branch, 922 West Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti. More info: www.growinghope.net, (734) 786-8401.

August 6/13/20/27 – Tuesday Résumé Clinics, 9-11 a.m. Learn how to construct a résumé and receive professional advice and editing. Washtenaw County Michigan Works! Career Transition Center, Key Bank Building, 2nd Floor, 301 West Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti. More info: call (734) 544-6799; TDD (800) 649-3777.

August 9-10 – 41st Annual Dexter Daze, 9 a.m. - 11 p.m. Popular art and entertainment festival featuring over 100 booths of artists and local businesses, free entertainment, and Saturday-morning parade (10 a.m.). Downtown Dexter. More info: www.dexterdaze.org, or email Info@DexterDaze.org.

August 11 – 1st Annual Bethlehem Tea Dance and Concert, 4-7 p.m. Casual afternoon dance event featuring Balmer’s Depot Town Big Band. Tea and refreshments served. Admission in advance or at the door \$10 / 8 (seniors) / \$20 (families of 3+). Bethlehem United Church of Christ, 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor. More info: (734) 663-6149, or email GTStanton@aol.com.

August 14 – Picnic for Peace, 6-8 p.m. Voices for the Prevention of Gun Violence, an initiative of Ann Arbor’s Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, hosts a family potluck celebrating peace and nonviolence. Family activities, music, closing ceremony, and action items for the prevention of gun violence. Beverages

provided; please bring a dish to share. New Pavilion at Island Park, Ann Arbor. More info: www.icpj.net.

August 15 – Kerrytown District Association’s 6th Annual Nashbash, 5-8 p.m. Free public event showcasing the music of Nashville, including first-class roster of live musicians, Trunkapalooza, food and spirits. Ann Arbor Farmers Market, 315 Detroit St., Ann Arbor. More info: www.kerrytownconcerthouse.com.

August 16 – “Peace Generator” Monthly World-Healing Peace Circle, 7-9 p.m. Join others from all walks of life in silent prayer or focused meditation toward peace, understanding, joy, and healing for your family, the world, and yourself. Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth, 704 Airport Blvd., Ann Arbor. More info: www.peacegenerator.org, or email info@peacegenerator.org.

August 16-18 – 35th Annual Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, 12-9 p.m. (Fri), 10-9 (Sat), 11-6 (Sun). Celebration of Ypsi’s history and culture features live entertainment by local artists and community groups, beer garden and casino, and children’s area. Riverside Park, 1 West Cross Street, Ypsilanti. More info: www.ypsilantiheritagefestival.com, or email YpsHeritageFest@gmail.com.

August 22 – Groundcover Volunteer Meeting, 7-8:30 p.m. Join in the production and distribution of Groundcover News. Bethlehem United Church of Christ, Groundcover Office, 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor. More info: contact@groundcovernews.com, or call (734) 972-0926.

August 24 – 2013 Parkridge Summer Festival and Joe Dulin Community Day, 11 a.m. - 8:30 p.m. This second joint festival of the two previously separate events will feature a car show, food, live local music, and information booths with information regarding free and low-cost programs and services in Ypsilanti. Parkridge Park, 591 Armstrong Drive, Ypsilanti. More info: www.parkridgecommunitycenter.org or call (734) 483-7700.

August 24 – 12th Annual Michigan Firehouse Museum Fire Truck Muster, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. A free public gathering of historic fire trucks from the 1920s through the 1970s, owners and enthusiasts. Riverside Park, 5 East Cross St., Ypsilanti. More info: www.michiganfirehousemuseum.org, or call (734) 547-0663.

August 27 – “Take a Chance Tuesday”: live & free music at The Ark, 7:30-10 p.m. Food Gatherers benefit concert featuring popular Livonia-based duo The Thornbills. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. Free; donations of nonperishable food items accepted. More info: www.theark.org, or call (734) 761-1451.

Community Engagement – a different approach to public safety

by Susan Beckett

Community Engagement is one leg of the tripod of services in the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office. Done well, it reduces the strain on the other legs – police and jail services – and changes the trajectory of teens growing up in difficult circumstances.

Youth initiatives fall into the Community Engagement bailiwick and was one of Sheriff Jerry Clayton's Ten Points of Change, the platform on which he ran for office and a blueprint he has followed in making changes. The program got a huge boost when Natalia Harris came aboard, first as an intern completing her Bachelors of Social Work (BSW), and now as an employee, following the birth of her third child.

Harris explained what keeps her coming back. "I get to see kids on a regular basis and I get to see the impact of these programs... How residents feel having the support of an agency as big as the Sheriff's Office when they are having an issue. Knowing that people have access," she said.

According to Harris, communities can present a lot like people do and will respond to an appropriate treatment plan. Walk through a neighborhood in which break-ins are common and you will find it looks depressed, gray. There are no kids playing in the streets, doors are closed and the windows shuttered. Medicine for the immediate problem – break-ins – is police enforcement. Working with residents to identify the causes and remedies underlying the break-ins, and then working to change those conditions, restores ongoing health in the community.

The Street Outreach Team, composed largely of people who survived the criminal justice system themselves, helps others in trouble navigate the legal system. They have contacts in the community they use to connect people in trouble with the resources they need to take care of themselves while keeping the community safe. They offer advice on how to survive, and even thrive, in prison, pointing out the pitfalls and opportunities. This federally-funded program also works with incarcerated people who self-identify as wanting assistance.

Other programs address community health by promoting positive behaviors and increased opportunity. Harris has a natural affinity for these, having come from difficult circumstances herself, even surviving a brief stint of homelessness. She knows how alone a



Natalia Harris leads a group known as Young Women Making Washtenaw County Better. The group is part of Sheriff Jerry Clayton's "Ten Points of Change."

teen can be, unfairly burdened by adult responsibilities and without someone looking out for their future. For the last year, Harris has facilitated a group of young women called Young Women Making Washtenaw County Better (YWMWB) that finds mentors for themselves and become mentors to others.

Programs like YWMWB do more than rehabilitate people who have strayed into lawlessness; they accomplish it with community service that results in a more nurturing environment. Young women looking to make a positive difference in their neighborhoods are joined by young women who choose to join the group as a diversion option when they are in trouble with the law. Together, they meet, support each other and volunteer, all under the supervision of Harris.

The genesis of the group was Sherriff Clayton charging Harris with finding seven girls from Ypsilanti to attend the Alpha Kappa Alpha scholarship fashion show. The five girls who actually attended discovered they like hanging out together and decided to take on a community service project together that they could note on their college applications. Three of the girls – Kelley Greene, Asia Yarbough, and Princess Logan – took the initiative to form the group and along the way discovered they really did want to help out and make a difference.

"One thing that impacted me," said Logan, "was when we had a mentor luncheon and the mentors shared how they struggled. Some of them are still struggling. Everybody struggles. It's a wonderful feeling giving back to the community. We went to Hope Clinic Soup Kitchen. We went to different low-income neighborhoods in

Washtenaw County and passed out toys and food. It was fun – and cold!"

Greene, another of the group's founders, felt the impact when they gave out food and toys on Christmas day and one woman came out of her house and gave the girls a big hug.

"It gave me the warm and fuzzies inside," Greene confided.

Ehmonie is one of the girls referred to the group through juvenile court. The girls are supposed to be between the ages of 15 and 20 but they made an exception for Ehmonie, who was only 13.

"At first I thought it was going to be a bunch of snotty girls and I came reluctantly. But now I really like it and I like giving back to my community. We went to a courtroom and I asked them to help get our name out there so they could contact us if they needed help. I was on probation for violence, but I've worked past that. I've learned to be open, loyal, not shy – to be myself," said Ehmonie.

"We see the growth in them all the time," said Greene. "There

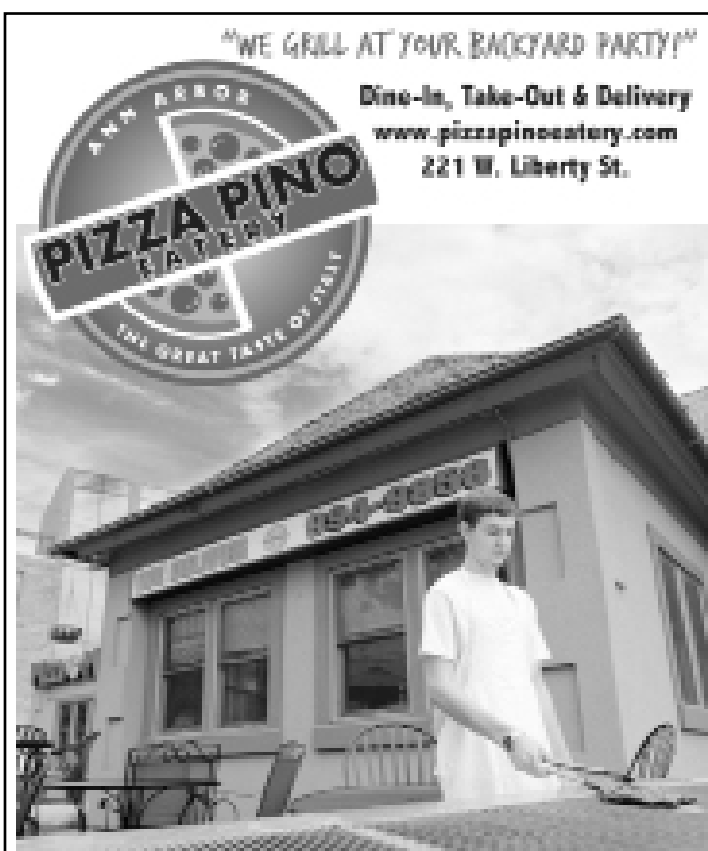
were some girls who were close to getting kicked out of school, and now they love going to school. One of the criteria for being in the group is you have to *want* to be in school, 'cause not only are you putting our name out there, you're representing yourself.

"There was one girl who had a lot of power – she could make people do whatever she wanted, and now she doesn't do that anymore. She loves school and is getting ready to take on a leadership position in our group."

Greene went on to say that being willing to participate and be engaged with the group was another of the requirements for membership. Other criteria are that you must reside or attend school in Washtenaw County, have a desire for any form of higher education, and regularly attend scheduled group meetings.

Another group member, Sade, is 17 and was introduced to the group when her friend Kelley Greene brought her to the Ballin' in the Willow three-on-three basketball game. There she met Harris and decided she wanted to meet more people, especially women. She was also interested in developing community service skills.

see COMMUNITY, page 9



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Decisions toward wellbeing: maximizing your gym experience

by Matt K.
Groundcover Vendor

There are times in life when we make decisions that seriously impact our futures. Some examples are getting married or divorced, buying a new car, attending college, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. These decisions truly shape our lives, and it is important to set standards for making smart choices. Life comes with many opportunities – raising a family, working, going to school, planning for college, traveling, maintaining a healthy relationship – and it is crucial that our daily decisions have a positive influence on our lifestyle.

Exercise is one pivot point through which we can proactively shape our lives. Joining a gym is a great first step, because gyms are typically located near neighborhoods and offer a variety of equipment and training at a reasonable monthly or annual fee. It is important to pick a convenient location, especially if we find ourselves so busy that we only have time for short workouts a few times per week.

Commitment is also important in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. How



can we make it easier to commit to

exercising regularly? One tip is to keep workouts interesting and fun. Gyms offer various workouts to choose from, such as weight training, free weights, aerobics, swimming, and dance classes. Keep exercise fresh by trying something new!

When going to a gym, we can expect a professional greeting. A positive welcome from the staff members shows their desire to understand and help us. The staff is not just there to greet us, though. They also cater to our exercise needs and can suggest ways to achieve our exercise goals, including weight loss or gain, muscle development, and risk reduction for diseases like diabetes, heart disease, or cancer.

If we would like to add variety to our exercise routine, we can also ask the staff to recommend something new. We might discover a workout we never would have found on our own – something that becomes part of our regular routine. A tour of the club or gym can help us select equipment or

classes that match our exercise goals. For example, if we want to build muscle, we might choose free weights.

If we can afford it, personal training is an effective way to personalize our exercise. With the help of a professional trainer, we can become educated about our bodies and how to maximize our workouts. Trainers may also offer personalized advice about how nutritional and lifestyle changes can improve our health. We notice how adjustments in our diet and exercise routine affect our bodies. We establish a relationship with ourselves where we notice a change in our bodies that results from taking action based on our commitments – we notice the perceived effort and also its result: how we feel with our new habits. No matter our abilities, a personal trainer can work with us to help us reach our goals.

Our daily decisions truly shape our destiny, and choosing to exercise can lead to a healthier, happier life. To keep workouts fresh, fun, and informed, consider looking into joining a local gym.

Life Choices

by Ashley M. Poe
Groundcover Contributor

Brought up in a tense place
trying to find the right path
Strayed too far from my mama's doors
found myself in the streets of
Drugs and Addiction
Only rule, don't mess with the police
The streets were addicting
so I stayed
Drugs, Parties, Stealing, Fighting, Sex, and Money
was the easy way
Feeling like a fool now
locked down on counts I can't even recognize
Man, I didn't do that sh**
But what's my word against theirs
Got caught up in the game
looking for fame
trying to work through life's struggles
Alone with nowhere to go
I need to get myself together and Recover
and let the true definition of strength within me
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	9		2		7			3

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

Cryptoquote

"TWTEJ PJTEHLPG FPGVC P

LMPG CMPVT, SRV GNSNAD

FPGVC VN MNCT FBPV VBTD' WT

YNV."

—ENS CBTIIHTMA

Solutions on page 11

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcov-

er News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity to:
contact@groundcovernews.com
734-972-0926

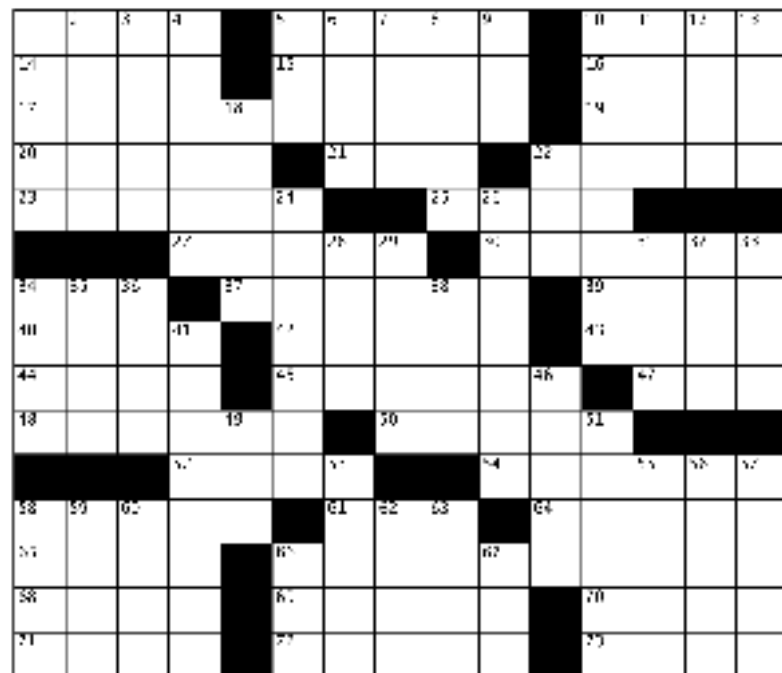
ACROSS

1. Mosaic portrait of John Galt
2. Kerosene
3. Birth
4. Visibility
5. Fraternity
6. Tropical fruit
7. Gator has been that long in the 1990s
8. River in England
9. One of the four South American empires
10. Sound-like bird
11. Brother of Moses
12. Largest of the Society Islands
13. Automobile instrument, for short
14. Great companies
15. Stone
16. Asian fruit
17. Outrigger
18. Tributary of the Mississippi River
19. Conductor Sandler
20. Warsaw's name
21. Former U.S. President
22. Conductor Jay
23. Antagonizes
24. Author of "The Tell-Tale Heart"
25. Fleet
26. Singer John
27. Clothing
28. Shot at
29. Baseball or football
30. Machine part
31. Star of America
32. German auto maker
33. 1620s puzzle
34. White
35. Misreat
36. Alaskan town
37. Mound
38. Hamburger
39. Actor Barry and homosexual

DOWN

1. Addition
2. Madison Square Garden, for one
3. Wash out
4. Semantics
5. Plot
6. Polytechnic
7. House
8. Progress
9. Excavator

Facts



10. 1990s boy band
11. Tact
12. Hurricane that preceded Covid in 2009
13. Norwegian island
14. Computer components manufacturer
15. Fiction
16. Actress Julia Roberts
17. Proclivities
18. The Dillards hit, "_____ the Road"
19. Come together
20. Claw
21. Metric prefix
22. Homes
23. Plunge
24. Thought
25. Criminal organization
26. Assam monetary unit
27. 1970s hair or hat

30. Ballads
31. Times strikes
32. Vitamin B
33. Driver's equipment
34. Overly recent person
35. Reel bed cover
36. Accidents
37. Decorative garment
38. Innings and outs
39. Message
40. Acroph
41. Fog
42. Music style
43. Lock opener

Puzzle by Jeff Richmond



Bethlehem United Church of Christ
423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(between William and Packard)

www.bethlehem-ucc.org (734) 665-6149

Bethlehem Church is home for the Groundcover Office

Sundays:

8:30 am and 10:00 am ~ Worship
10:00 am ~ Church School

(There will be only one coffee hour at 9:30 am in the Lounge)

Upcoming Events:

August 4 ~ Heritage Sunday
Communion at both services

(Celebrating 180 of service to the Lord and community)

August 11 ~

1st Annual Bethlehem Tea Dance and Concert
4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Admission in advance or at the door:

\$10, \$8 seniors, \$20 family of 3 or more.

August 31 ~ Football Parking

(If you are going to the game, park here and help support our youth program)

an invitation to grow in spirit and serve with joy

Community Engagement – a different approach to public safety

continued from page 4

"I actually like this group. I actually like all the girls," said Sade. "I got good at people skills and talking in front of groups. I was always a really shy and quiet person. I looked down and didn't project my voice."

"We've done Hope Clinic Soup Kitchen giving out food to the homeless and Ypsilanti Pride Day. I also work with kids aged eight to 12 in the Mentor to Youth Project at Parkridge [Community Center]. Our groups will share space there this summer and one day we will do Community Pride Day."

Harris takes pride in Sade, Kelley, Ehmonie and all the girls who have moved through their barriers to become leaders in their communities. Her emphasis on valuing education is underscored by her personal history and insight into the hopelessness of living on minimum-wage jobs.

Harris was born and raised in Muskegon, to a mom who was ill and disabled all of Harris's life. Her brother was also emotionally challenged, and Harris bore adult responsibilities from the age of 12 on.

When the Welfare to Work program began, Harris was working at McDonald's and barely attending high school. Since she was the only able-bodied person in her family, the Aid to Families and Dependent Children agency determined 17-year-old Harris as the family representative. Their recommendation was that she work full-time instead of finishing high school. If she did not follow this "recommendation," her family would be cut off from all aid, except for the Social Security Insurance (SSI) payments for her brother. She dropped out of high school after the winter break and worked full-time until February of 2003.

She knew by then that five dollars an

hour was not much money and she would be trapped in poverty forever if she followed the recommended path. Determined to avoid that fate, she researched community colleges and relocated to Ypsilanti, living with an aunt and intending to attend Washtenaw Community College (WCC) after graduating from Willow Run High School. A series of bureaucratic regulations delayed her graduation for a year, during which time she attempted to enroll in several schools and worked at McDonald's part-time.

Issues with her aunt eventually left her homeless, until classmates referred her to Ozone House, to which she was already going to write and share poetry. That fall she commuted two hours each way from Ozone's Miller House to school in Willow Run. When they refused to count the credits from her drama courses and said she'd have to wait another year to graduate, she transferred to Stone School, an Ann Arbor alternative high school, and graduated in February of 2004.

Harris studied business at WCC beginning in May, then transferred to Eastern Michigan University (EMU). She had met her future husband, a chef at Miller House, and was preparing to run the business side of a restaurant they planned to open together. When he cooled on the idea of opening a restaurant, Harris took a classmate's suggestion that she could find more collegial relationships and interesting subjects in social work courses. Harris eventually switched her concentration and graduated in August of 2011 with her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work (BSW). She will complete her Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) in April 2014.

In addition to attending school and raising three daughters, she works as the Community Outreach Coordinator at the Sheriff's Office, where she uses

her life experiences and training to guide others through unforgiving systems. She also works with future social workers, and the skill she has displayed in having them accomplish real good in the community while becoming familiar with the multiple challenges clients face, has made the Community Engagement division of the Sheriff's Office a favored placement site for EMU BSW students. According to Stephen Rassi, for whom she works as a teaching assistant, another lecturer – Greg Pratt – was so impressed with the experiences of the two groups he sent to Harris last year, that this year he placed all 26 of his students with her.

Harris split them into groups and assigned one of the following projects to each: establishing a neighborhood watch in the McArthur Boulevard area of Ypsilanti; enhancing the citizen's patrol in the West Willows neighborhood of Ypsilanti; taking over the Telling It after-school enrichment program that had previously been run by other agencies like SOS and Avalon and was housed at the now-defunct C.O.P.E. O'Brien Center. This challenging project was assigned four groups charged with finding resources for support within the McArthur Blvd.,

West Willow and South Side Ypsilanti communities, where Telling It will operate. It is currently running in the West Willow, funded by a grant and additional sponsors. Facilitators for the other communities are training there as the program uses the arts to develop literacy skills in 11- to 15-year-old students, and provides a social alternative for youth exposed to community violence.

Harris's family experiences have drawn her to law enforcement. She was in the middle of her father's 10 children, and observed all of the older siblings' run-ins with the law. Her oldest brother was locked up when he was about 13. Harris recalls how completely disconnected from people he was when he was released, and how hard it was for him to come back to the same community, where nothing had changed.

Changing the revolving door to jail is Harris' mission. She asks questions like, "Why are our communities like that? What can we do to change them?" And then she galvanizes and supports community members to make those changes.

GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

Groundcover vendor Miriam Lindsay was deeply moved by a poem she received from a Spanish church. She enlarged, printed and laminated it and will be selling \$3 copies at area churches to share the prayer, recover her costs, and make a donation to Groundcover.

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Camp Take Notice leads the fight to protect Pizza in the Park

by Greg Hoffman
Groundcover News Sales Manager

Over the past several months, there has been a growing controversy about the future of the weekly event at Liberty Plaza at the corner of Liberty and Division in Ann Arbor commonly known as “Pizza in the Park.” For the last seven years, regardless of the weather or holidays, Vineyard Church has sponsored a free meal of hot pizza to the lower-income community of Ann Arbor at that park. In addition to the pizza, patrons of Pizza in the Park (PITP) often receive food to take home, clothes, shoes, and other much-needed supplies.

In addition to providing the bare necessity of food, PITP also provides patrons with the opportunity for social interaction, both with peers who may be facing similar hardships, and with volunteers and other community members. This display of care, interest, and camaraderie can have an enormously positive effect on those who visit Liberty Plaza on Friday nights, and can have a genuinely therapeutic effect on individuals who may be suffering from depression or other mental illness. Simply stated,



Sheri Wander speaks to City Council about Pizza in the Park.

PITP helps reinforce that there are people out there who care.

After complaints from local businesses about the nature of the crowd at Liberty Plaza, the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department informed Vineyard Church that they would need

to pay \$137 each week to reserve the park, a fee that would have been so cost prohibitive to the church, that it would have prevented PITP from continuing. After an unsuccessful attempt to change venues to the Ann Arbor Community Center, the future of PITP seemed to be in jeopardy. At this point, members of Camp Take Notice decided to take up the cause, and began lobbying the City government to keep PITP alive. They wrote letters to the City Council, and Mayor Hieftje responded by asking the Parks and Recreation Department to exempt Vineyard Church from having to pay the weekly fee.

Despite this victory, the issue is not yet resolved, since there is nothing in writing to protect this spoken arrangement. Camp Take Notice members, along with other volunteers, have been working to influence the Ann Arbor City Council to pass a Humanitarian Aid Ordinance that formally preserves Pizza in the Park, and opens the door for other churches, charities, and other organizations to engage in “random acts of kindness” without being charged a park usage fee. Camp Take Notice members have spoken in front of the City Council on multiple occasions, beseeching the

officials to pass this local law immediately. Your support is needed to help make this idea a reality.

What you can do to weighing in on the Humanitarian Aid Ordinance:

1. *Write an email to City Council.* Go to a2gov.org/government/citycouncil, then click “email Mayor and Council.”
2. *Write a physical letter to the Mayor or Council members.* Address letters to: City of Ann Arbor, ATTN: City Council [or member name; see below], P.O. Box 8647, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.
3. *Call a Council member or the Mayor’s office.* Council members are: Marcia Higgins 734-662-0487 Margie Teall 734-476-2777 Chuck Warpehoski 734-972-8304 Mike Anglin 734-741-9786 Sabra Briere 734-995-3518 Sumi Kailaspathy 734-769-5698 Sally Hart Peterson 734-996-5569 Stephen Kunselman 734-975-4604 Chris Taylor 734-834-3600
4. *Volunteer and help spread the word!* If you are interested in volunteering to help pass the Humanitarian Aid Ordinance, please email rithttoreceivehumanitarianaid@gmail.com, or call (734) 660-2140.

other Art Fair sections did not have this policy.) The State Street Art Fair is a colorful event; vendors of clothing, paintings, sculptures, photography, and jewelry can be seen at every turn. Nonetheless, one sight was conspicuously absent – that of street musicians. Busking hot spots, such as the corner of State and Liberty and the sidewalk outside Jimmy Johns, were devoid of their usual occupants. Several street performers were asked to pack up and leave the State Street area by Art Fair staff. It is unclear to me what the exact components of this policy are – I was unable to reach the proper authorities for comment – however, it resulted in the lack of buskers in the streets.

Similarly, Liberty Plaza, a favorite hangout of street musicians, has been taken over by a large, navy-blue tent bearing the sign “Michigan State Police Dept.” The police are stationed in Liberty Plaza to deter musicians and the homeless from lingering there, despite the fact that it is a public space. When I asked about this new policy, one officer patiently explained that patrons are frightened to go by Liberty Plaza due to the presence of the

see BUSKERS, page 12

MISSION: building community, searching for land

by Carolyn Lusch and Greg Hoffman
Groundcover Contributors

Last year, through an excellent effort on the part of The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), Michigan Campaign To End Homelessness, and state and local authorities, 50 residents of Camp Take Notice – a former tent city in Scio Township that was evicted by the Michigan Department of Transportation – were given one-year subsidies for housing in Washtenaw County. Of the remaining camp residents, around 28 did not qualify for subsidies for various reasons. Now, a year later, these subsidies are drawing to a close, and both the residents and the organization that sponsored CTN, MISSION (Michigan Itinerant Shelter System – Interdependent Out of Necessity), are facing challenges and opportunities for the future.

MISSION board members Peggy Lynch and Sheri Wander described the disappointment and shame that come for the individuals who received housing subsidies but were unable to stay housed. Peggy told the story of an individual who was homeless for seven years, received a housing subsidy for the one year, started school but was unable to keep up with the program, and is now facing homelessness again – a feeling she likens to “standing on a melting iceberg.” Many of those who were housed faced similarly intense challenges. Most ended up in a room in a house in Ypsilanti, according to MISSION. They were not given additional support services and had difficulty attending the CTN Sunday meetings in Ann Arbor, since bus service ends early on the weekends. The rooms were not furnished, and Rev. Cathi King of Westminster Presbyterian Church took on the charge of organizing a household goods drive to make the spaces livable. All this, and the public perception that this was an opportunity that could be wasted, left many of the residents “set up to feel like they’ve failed.”



MISSION board member Peggy Lynch and Camp Take Notice founder Caleb Poirier are working to find a permanant location after last year’s eviction.

MISSION members are quick to acknowledge the excellent work done by social service agencies in Washtenaw County in attempting to deal with the problem of homelessness. But none of those organizations have adequate resources to meet the enormous need. MISSION estimates that there are 55-65 individuals sleeping around churches per night, in addition to those served by the Delonis Center and those sleeping outside in hidden campsites. The winter rotating shelter, in which various churches take turns hosting those in need of a place to sleep, ends on April 8. After that, people spread out to secret bridges, parks, and private sites, from where they are inevitably evicted. According to Wander, people have to move every night because of harassment and eviction. Many stay with relatives or friends, housing unsafe numbers of people in small spaces. All of this creates an overwhelming sense, in Wander’s words, that “there is no place to go.”

Despite the physical space for CTN no longer existing, MISSION board members Caleb Poirier and Antonio Benton described all of the incredible ways in which they continue to foster community. They host several weekly events, from the MISSION board meeting, to the CTN dinner and

meeting, to nonviolence trainings and support groups. They build camaraderie through special events such as the Hawaiian Party and Christmas Party, and also take on tasks to contribute to the wider community. AnnArbor.com published an article in November 2012 about MISSION members’ volunteer trip to New Jersey to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. More locally, the organization has been active in cleaning up abandoned campsites around bridges and parks, and even has adopted the stretch of road by Zeeb and Wagner near the camp’s former location. Former CTN resident Alonzo Young related the story of how, earlier this summer, MISSION members attended his mother’s funeral to support him.

Despite the efforts to preserve the community, members of MISSION are adamant that a physical space for Camp Take Notice is necessary. According to MISSION Vice President Greg Pratt, homelessness is not “a pond to be drained,” and with the counted homeless population of Washtenaw County having doubled over the last two years, the need for a place for those who can’t go anywhere else is more urgent than ever before. CTN not only provided a place to live but “also gave you a neighborhood,” as Poirier put it, with community members who worked out problems, supported each other, and functioned democratically. MISSION is searching anxiously and deliberately for the next Camp Take Notice.

Find out more about MISSION and Camp Take Notice at www.missiona2.org.

Street performers enrich Ann Arbor’s summer culture

by Stacey Balter
Groundcover Contributor

Visitors are drawn to Ann Arbor for a multitude of reasons, one of the foremost being the thriving local culture. There are great restaurants to sample from, art galleries to be explored, and entertainment to be had on every corner. Buskers, or street performers, are an integral part of that culture.



Ryan from Wilmington, N.C. plays to passersby at Liberty Plaza in Ann Arbor.

Eddy Powell, a multi-talented musician and magician, brings enthusiasm, kindness, and a love to please to the streets. Although busking can be quite a lucrative profession – on his best day Eddy made \$85 in one hour, which is 13 times the minimum wage – it’s not about the money. “Busking is a two-way street. I can brighten a person’s day,” says Eddy, as he sits at the corner of Main Street and Liberty, one of his favorite busking spots. According to Eddy, you never know how people are feeling; this is why he strives to bring a little bit of laughter into their lives with a juggling trick, or a smile to their faces with a beloved song.

Despite the positive impact of street performers like Eddy, there remains a stigma against busking.

“People can go to a club or a concert and pay to listen to music, but when it’s on the street, for some reason it is inappropriate,” Eddy observes.

This stigma is exemplified by the treatment of street performers during a local event that has become an international mecca for creativity and craftsmanship: the Ann Arbor Art Fair. For four days every mid-July, artists and artisans travel to Ann Arbor from all over the world to explore and to express

many different shades of life. Among them are street performers, hailing from Ireland to Ypsilanti, who flock to this event to share in a love of art.

I was looking forward to interviewing buskers from all over the world about their experiences, and was surprised to find substantially fewer street performers than in previous years. I learned this was because the State Street Art Fair administration instituted a new policy, prohibiting busking in that section. (To my knowledge, the three

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Pasta with Fresh Veggies

by Lisa Sonnenburg
Groundcover Contributor

1 12-oz package of pasta
(rotini, penne or macaroni)
2 bell peppers, chopped
2 ripe tomatoes or 1.5 cups
cherry tomatoes, chopped
4 green onions, chopped
2 cloves of garlic, minced
½ cup sliced olives (black
and/or green)
½ cup fresh basil, chopped
2 T olive oil
1 T red wine vinegar
½ cup feta cheese
Salt and pepper to taste



1. Prepare pasta according to package directions.
2. While pasta is cooking, chop peppers, tomatoes, green onions, garlic and basil.
3. Once pasta is cooked, drain and return to pot.
4. Combine pasta with peppers, tomatoes, garlic, olives and basil.
5. Drizzle olive oil and vinegar over pasta and veggies. Add salt and pepper to taste. Toss to combine.
6. Top with feta cheese.
7. Enjoy immediately, or place in refrigerator overnight to chill and have as pasta salad.

This recipe works best with fresh ingredients, is very easy, and can be served warm or chilled as a pasta salad. Or, use half the recipe warm for dinner and chill the other half for a pasta salad for lunch the next day.

Serves 4.

Buskers– Ann Arbor's street performers

continued from page 10

homeless. This was news to me, since street performance has been a part of Ann Arbor culture for as long as I have lived here.

During the Art Fair last year, I sat a block away from Liberty Plaza with another musician friend, and two police officers stopped by to listen to us play guitar. I was treated with nothing but kindness from the community then. I felt what Eddy had told me about – the feeling of giving back through music. I was looking forward to experiencing the same kind of feeling this year, and for visitors to enjoy a unique style of entertainment.

I believe that this culture of compassion

is not lost to Ann Arbor; although the State Street Art Fair staff requested that Eddy leave his usual busking area, the people of Ann Arbor continue to support his music. Despite the tension between buskers and police officers due to this new policy, their mutual respect remains intact. Recently, a couple of officers approached Eddy and asked to take a picture with him.

The community has made it clear that street performers will remain part of the local culture. Whatever the obstacles, those like Eddy will continue to humbly carry out the long, rich tradition of busking every day, with a smile on their faces, and a song for the people.

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